



Short Safety Subject

WHAT TO DO ABOUT "NEAR MISSES?"

Unlike a western gunfight "shoot out" at the corral on television, serious accidents can cause real anguish and suffering so real and vivid that persons involved or nearby bystanders rarely forget the flow of blood, broken limbs, crushed bodies, or screams of pain. An accident without injury though is more like the bloodless, painless fakery of television "violence" - perhaps without real purpose in the drama, and therefore easy to forget.

In real life there is a danger in brushing off accidents that do not hurt, harm, or damage. When these accidents, or perhaps we should refer to them as **near misses**, happen we should immediately run the red warning flag up the pole. Because a non-injury accident is like a 104 degree fever, it's a positive sign or symptom that something is wrong.

Sometimes we misdiagnose or completely fail to diagnose the symptoms of near misses, because luck or blind chance saved us from injury. We may tend to shrug it off and forget the near miss with a casual kind of ignorance. Hopefully everyone agrees that it is not a good practice to rely on luck for effective accident prevention.

One of the best ways to eliminate the likelihood of future close calls is through effective root cause analysis and effective corrective action taken on near misses. A list of near misses can be almost endless: lack of proper machine guarding; improper maintenance or grounding of equipment; missing handrails or guardrails; poor housekeeping; improperly stored material; stubbing a toe on a protruding floor object; bumping up against a sharp object; or tripping over clutter and almost falling down. It's best to learn the real lessons from these near misses, since they are very likely to continue to occur repeatedly until an injury occurs.

There was a study done many years ago that found for every serious or disabling injury reported, there were about 10 injuries of a less serious nature, 30 property damage incidents, and about 600 incidents (near misses) with no visible injury or property damage. This study was part of the foundation for the widely accepted accident prevention theory that "increased frequency leads to severity."

How can you help? Report each and every near miss incident to your supervisor immediately in order to help prompt investigation and follow up actions that will reduce the potential for future near misses. Supervisors must partially rely upon you and your fellow workers to report these to them as they just can't see everything.

If you are involved with or witness a near miss incident, remember that you or your co-worker may not get a second injury free chance to hoist that red warning flag up the pole. Do your part to help make the workplace safe for everyone involved.

Report those near misses to your supervisor immediately!